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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

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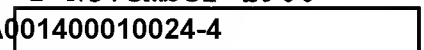


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Information as of 1600
2 November 1966

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HIGHLIGHTS

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[REDACTED]

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Hanoi waited until the Cuban delegation led by President Dorticos and Defense Minister Raul Castro departed for Moscow before acknowledging that they had visited North Vietnam.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
The only significant military activity on 1 November was a 12-hour engagement between US soldiers of Operation THAYER II and a battalion-size Communist force --possibly elements of the 3rd NVA/VC Division in northeastern Binh Dinh Province (Paras. 1-2).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
Premier Ky told the press on 1 November that he is calling off a scheduled visit to the US in mid-November (Para. 1). The ten-day amnesty period being offered to members of the "struggle movement" in hiding in the Hue area has been extended (Para. 2). There are unconfirmed rumors that the government is seeking replacements for some of the ministers who withdrew their resignations from the cabinet last week (Paras. 3-4).

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III. North Vietnamese Military Developments:

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[REDACTED] a possible prison for captured Americans (Paras. 1-2).

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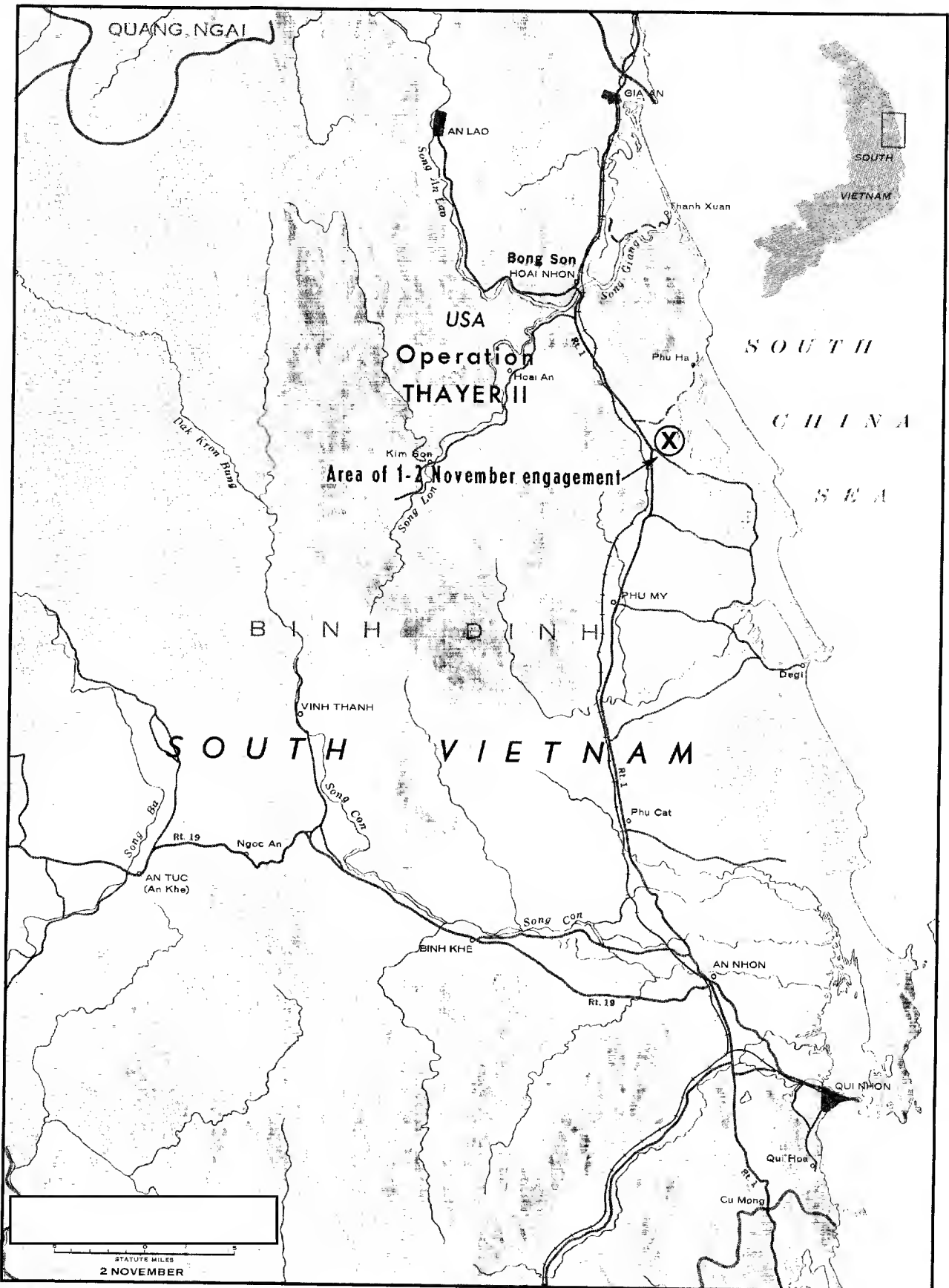
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[REDACTED]

V. Communist Political Developments: Hanoi has publicized the three-day visit of a Cuban delegation, led by President Dorticos and Defense Minister Raul Castro (Paras. 1-2). The Liberation Front Central Committee has issued a special appeal to its fighting units to disrupt US plans for a major offensive during the coming "dry season!" (Para. 3).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Company-strength elements of a six-battalion US 1st Air Cavalry Division task force conducting Operation THAYER II in the coastal lowlands of north-eastern Binh Dinh Province engaged an estimated Communist battalion five miles southeast of Bong Son on 1 November. Sporadic contact continued for more than 12 hours, resulting in enemy losses of 37 killed and US losses of seven killed and 19 wounded.

2. Since its initiation on 24 October, Operation THAYER II, whose primary mission is to assure allied control of Route 1 and adjacent coastal areas in north-eastern Binh Dinh, has produced cumulative Communist losses of 156 killed, 10 captured, and 529 suspects apprehended. Some of these losses may have been sustained by elements of the 3rd NVA/Viet Cong Division (formerly the 610th Division) which may have deployed to this area in an effort to elude Operation IRVING, the highly successful allied ground offensive conducted from 1-24 October in the south-central coastal portion of Binh Dinh Province.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Premier Ky told the press on 1 November that he is calling off a scheduled visit to the US in mid-November because of his heavy work schedule. Ky had been invited to address the annual meeting of the Associated Press Managing Editors Association in San Diego and accepted on condition that his official duties would allow him to attend.

Political Conditions in Hue

2. Thua Thien Province chief Khoa recently [redacted] agreed to extend for an additional three days the ten-day amnesty period being offered to all members of the "struggle movement" still in hiding in the Hue area. Khoa stated that he had also agreed to several requests made by Thich Don Hau, the ranking Buddhist monk in the I Corps area, who recently returned to Hue, regarding Buddhist property being held by the government. Hau told Khoa that the Buddhists are now ready to join other nationalist elements in carrying on the fight against the Viet Cong, but Khoa believes that Hau's real purpose in returning to Hue probably was to improve the morale of local Buddhists, and then await orders from Thich Tri Quang in Saigon.

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4. The status of Premier Ky's cabinet has remained unchanged since the replacement of Economy Minister Thanh on 28 October, and the basic agreement between Ky and four of the dissident ministers on 27 October appears to be holding. The situation, however, still appears to be somewhat uncertain, and it is quite possible that government leaders are at least attempting to determine what kind of alternative to the present cabinet lineup is available.

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III. NORTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

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1. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] if American prisoners are being held in Hanoi, they are imprisoned at a military headquarters area near the main rail line. The possible prison is a large walled-in establishment. The walls--surmounted by three strands of electrified wire--were freshly painted white and lighted all night. [REDACTED] once in early September people inside the walls were heard speaking what seemed to be English. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] right after the attack on oil depots outside of Hanoi on 29 June a pilot captured in the attack was taken along the street from this area and later brought back.

2. The location of this reported prisoner of war area is only a short distance from the main Hanoi prison. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] American prisoners were being held at the main prison.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. On 1 November, Hanoi publicized the visit of Cuban President Dorticos and Defense Minister Raul Castro to North Vietnam. The delegation was apparently in North Vietnam for three days and all publicity was withheld until after the delegation left for Moscow. The post-visit propaganda indicated that the Vietnamese reception was extremely warm and cordial. The party daily featured a picture of President Ho Chi Minh hugging Dorticos, and the turnout of the North Vietnamese leadership for the welcoming ceremonies was impressive. Only three politburo members were absent from the list broadcast by Hanoi radio: Nguyen Chi Thanh, who is in South Vietnam; Hoang Van Hoan, who is attending the Albanian party congress; and party First Secretary Le Duan.

2. The reason for Le Duan's absence is not clear. Although he has made occasional public appearances in Hanoi in the past several months, he has been conspicuously absent from the public aspects of talks with four foreign Communist party delegations which have visited Hanoi in recent weeks. His last known public appearances were in Hanoi at celebrations on 30 September in honor of Chinese National Day and at a public rally on 19 October. It is possible that Le Duan is occupied with important party responsibilities connected either with the war in the South or with the Sino-Soviet dispute. It is also possible that his role in the party leadership has undergone some change. His inactivity in interparty relations for a period of several months is most unusual for the man who holds the number two rank in the party politburo and is the party first secretary.

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Liberation Front Calls for Military Step-Up

3. The Liberation Front Central Committee has issued a special appeal to its fighting units to disrupt US plans for a major offensive during the coming "dry season." Hanoi radio broadcast the appeal on 1 November calling for all "necessary sacrifices and hardships" to defeat the US and demonstrate Communist determination to continue fighting. The appeal stated, "We will make them understand our iron-like determination and, if they do not understand it now, we will make them understand it in five, ten, or 20 years." The appeal asked for stepped up military action against US forces and was directed to the guerrillas, and the regional and regular Liberation armed forces. The appeal said that the US must be convinced that the Vietnamese people will not negotiate "on capitulation terms."

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